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Plant a “Victory” Grove!

By Laura Sweany, Michael & Carolyn Dolan

Terrible storms, heat waves, cold snaps, irregular season dates are now regular occurrences. But just when we might think that we are helpless in the face of planetary change, we can remember that perennial food plants, especially trees, give us the power to sequester carbon, improve soil through no tilling, reduce erosion, maintain soil biodiversity, increase local food security, and create bountiful wild habitats.

We as Americans have met challenges to our food security before, when the Victory Gardens of WWI and WWII were part of our national landscape. In 1942, roughly 15 million families planted Victory Gardens – by 1944, an estimated 20 million gardens produced approximately 8 million tons of food! This was equivalent to 40% of all the fresh fruits and vegetables consumed in the US! Together we can harness the national spirit again and plant trees to help moderate the changes in the climate by following the example of the silent generation. Consider creating your own “Victory Grove”.

Native Americans knew how powerful the chestnut trees were for the health and stability of their societies, and they carefully managed the Eastern Seaboard forests until *every 4th tree was a sweet chestnut!* These amazing nuts have a nutritional profile much like corn. Consider planting groves of chestnut for a carbohydrate source and walnuts, hazelnuts, and hickories for a source of protein.

Woody plants, trees, shrubs and vines only need to be planted once unlike annual crops that disturb soil during planting every year. Most shrubs and vines can live 50-100 years or more. Tree ages are often measured in centuries. When exploring old homesteads we find that trees are generally still amazingly productive long after the dwelling is gone. The deep roots of mature trees make them incredibly drought tolerant and able to forage widely for nutrients. The act of planting a fruit or nut tree can be a real legacy for future generations to come.

Can you imagine if the street plantings in American towns and cities included fruits and nut trees? If the gifts we gave each other were plants that brought us each a bountiful yield every year? If the landscapes in every HOA and apartment block were filled with edible goodies? The UN has identified tree planting and small, homestead-scale farming as the wave of our future international food production – you can catch the curl!

In 2019, Ethiopian citizens planted more than 353 million trees in 12 hours. Let’s take up the challenge!

So if you want to help stabilize the climate and cool your house in summer: plant a nut tree. Want to harvest nutrient-dense sweets? Plant some berries. Need to have a privacy screen or create a windbreak? Plant some hazelnuts, fruiting bushes, or clumping bamboo. Surrounded by hot concrete? Grow some vining grapes or kiwis. Need a drought tolerant option? Plant a fig, olive, or jujube tree.

We’ve been inspired over the years by the age range of our customers... from 10 to 80+ years old. Working together, shoulder to shoulder, we can create lush, productive and cooling landscapes. Happy planting!